

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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R 181832Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6617
INFO PANCANAL
USCINCSO

UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 PANAMA 2648

DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

USCINCSO FOR J-2 AND PAO

PANCANAL FOR IO

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PN
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTIONS

FOLLOWING FROM ICA/PANAMA O R 181831Z APR 78 SENT ACTION
USINFO WASHDC INFO SECSTATE WASHDC REPEATED TO YOU:

QUOTE UNCLAS

MEDIA REACTION

E.O. 11652: N/A

1-PANAMA CITY.--AS "ZERO HOUR" APPROACHES, PANAMANIAN MEDIA
MAINTAIN MODERATE TONE APRIL 18, WITH EDITS, AND COMMENTARIES
POINTING OUT IMPORTANCE OF SENATE VOTE AND ITS EFFECT ON
FUTURE U.S.-LATAM RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH SOME OUTCRIES AGAINST
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DECONCINI RESERVATION STILL APPEAR, MOST OF MEDIA SEEM TO TAKE
ATTITUDE THAT IT IS NOW SENATE AS A WHOLE WHICH WILL DECIDE
FATE OF TREATIES. MEDIA ALSO GIVES PROMINENT PLAY TO
PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS' PLEAS FOR CALM FROM STUDENTS.

2-CRITICA BANNERS AND OTHER PAPERS GIVE LESS PROMINENT FRONT-
PAGE COVERAGE TO GEN. TORRIJOS VISIT TO OPENING OF PANAMA CITY

SECONDARY SCHOOL AND HIS PLEA TO STUDENTS TO REMAIN CALM. TORRIJOS, ACCORDING TO CRITICA, TOLD STUDENTS "IN THESE HOURS IS WHEN WE MUST BE CALM, BECAUSE YOUTH SO INVOLVED IN THE STRUGGLE MUST MAINTAIN ITS PATRIOTIC SERENITY WHEN MANY PEOPLE, WELL OR BADLY INTENTIONED, TRY TO GET YOU TO PAY ATTENTION TO THEM."

3-TORRIJOS CONTINUED, "THERE WILL BE MANY RUMORS AND COUNTER RUMORS IN THESE DAYS. LET'S COME TO AN AGREEMENT HERE. DO NOT GO INTO THE STREETS SPONTANEOUSLY TO EXPOSE YOUR DEFENSELESS BODIES IF WE HAVE NOT COME TO AN AGREEMENT FIRST. THERE MUST BE VERY COORDINATED ACTION FROM NOW UNTIL WEDNESDAY. PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL MAINTAIN THE CALM."

4. APRIL 17 DEMONSTRATION BY 100 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AT U.S. EMBASSY RECEIVED LIMITED PLAY IN WRITTEN PRESS: PHOTO ON INSIDE PAGE OF MATUTINO, AND FRONT PAGE WIRE SERVICE STORIES IN ESTRELLA AND STAR AND HERALD. TV ACCOUNTS WERE MORE COMPLETE, WITH EXTENSIVE FILM FOOTAGE OF STUDENTS THROWING PAINT ON EMBASSY FACADE AND FLEEING FROM NATIONAL GUARD TEARGAS. CHANNEL 2 MENTIONED STUDENTS' ACCUSATION THAT "NATIONAL GUARD IS INSTRUMENT OF OPPRESSION TO PROTECT U.S. INTERESTS."

5-ALL MORNINGS APRIL 18 FRONT PAGE WIRE SERVICE ITEMS WITH LATEST SPECULATION ON TREATY VOTE; MODERATE HEADS. BOTH TV STATIONS FEATURED LONG TELEPHONE REPORTS ON SITUATION BY UNCLASSIFIED

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CORRESPONDENTS IN WASHINGTON. CHANNEL 2'S MARIO VELASQUEZ COMMENTED ESPECIALLY ON BARBARA WALTERS ABC INTERVIEW WITH TORRIJOS, SAYING IT "GAVE U.S. TV VIEWERS THE IMPRESSION OF A SERENE, FIRM MAN, WITH NO TYPE OF EMOTIONAL INSTABILITY...AND WAS A POSITIVE PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF OF GOVERNMENT AT A TIME WHEN WORDS CAN BE MISINTERPRETED." VELASQUEZ SAID THAT "U.S. CAN SHOW ITS GREATNESS TOMORROW (APRIL 18)" ON WHAT WILL BE "THE LONGEST DAY OF PANAMA'S EXISTENCE."

6-MATUTINO FRONT-PAGES TEXT OF JOURNALISTS' UNION RESOLUTION CALLING FOR "REJECTION OF ANY AMENDMENTS WHICH THREATEN THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF PANAMA AND THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INDEPENDENCE OF OUR NATION."

7-EDITS IN ALL THREE SPANISH MORNINGS APRIL 18 EXPRESS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM ABOUT VOTE OUTCOME. CRITICA NOTES "TENSE EXPECTATION" OF TODAY, AND CONCLUDES, "WITH LUCK, TODAY WILL BE A HIGH MARK OF HISTORY WON BY INFINITE SACRIFICES. AND WE MUST RISE ABOVE ANY ADVERSITY, BECAUSE THE U.S. NEEDS JUST AND EQUITABLE TREATIES AS MUCH AS WE DO."

8-MATUTINO IN "ZERO HOUR" EDIT SAYS SENATE DECISION INVOLVES

"THE EXACT MEASURE OF CREDIBILITY THAT WE IN LATIN AMERICA SHOULD GIVE IN THE NEAR AND DISTANT FUTURE TO THE WORD OF THE U.S." EDIT REVIEWS HISTORY OF TREATIES, AND OPTIMISM WHICH REIGNED SEPTEMBER 7 AT TREATY SIGNING, BUT CONTINUES, "HOWEVER, AT THE LAST MINUTE, THE INTERESTS OF SUPERIORITY, DISGUISED AS 'RESERVATIONS', DUG UP THE OLD CORPSE, NOW MUMMIFIED FROM DISUSE, ON INTERVENTIONISM, INTENDING THAT THIS RESURRECTION SHOULD TAKE PLACE ON OUR SOIL, WITH THE PRETEXT OF ASSURING THE NEUTRALITY OF THE PANAMA CANAL."

9-MATUTINO CONTINUES, "THIS IS THE GHOST WHICH HOVERS OVER THIS HOUR, AND WHICH CASTS SHADOWS OF SERIOUS DOUBTS ON THE SINCERITY OF THE MANY EXPRESSIONS OF RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WHICH ARE MADE BY THOSE WHO NOW WISH TO LEGALIZE INTERVENTION IN OUR LAND."
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HOWEVER, CONCLUDES THE EDIT, "WE PANAMANIAN KNOW HOW TO FACE THE ALTERNATIVES OF THIS ZERO HOUR, ...WITH UNCONQUERABLE FAITH IN THE HIGHNESS OF OUR OBJECTIVES, IN JUSTICE WHICH CANNOT HAVE DISAPPEARED FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH, AND IN THE INTEREST WHICH THE U.S. MUST HAVE IN THAT ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD CAN CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. WILL KEEP ITS WORD WHEN IT MAKES A PROMISE."

10-ESTRELLA EDIT IS IN SAME VEIN, AND SAYS, "THE FINAL DECISION WHICH IS REACHED TODAY WILL CONSTITUTE THE MOST ELOQUENT DEMONSTRATION OF THE CURRENT ATTITUDE OF THAT NATION IN THE AREA OF ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, ESPECIALLY WITH LATIN AMERICA." EDIT CONTINUES, "WHATEVER THE SENATRIAL DECISION OF TODAY, WE PANAMANIAN SHOULD ALL CONTINUE COMPLETELY CALM. IF THE TREATIES ARE SHIPWRECKED, THEY WILL SINK IN THE SENATE, AND THROUGH NO FAULT OF OUR OWN. BUT IN ANY CASE, WE WILL HAVE LOST A DIPLOMATIC BATTLE, LONG AND COSTLY, NOTHING MORE. THE NEXT STEP WOULD BE UP TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, TO GET OUT OF THE MESS IN WHICH THE GROUP OF SENATORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SITUATION HAS PUT IT. BUT IF, AS WE HOPE, RIGHT AND GOOD SENSE TRIUMPH AND JUST SOLUTIONS ARE REACHED, WE WILL HAPPILY CELEBRATE SUCH A RESULT, ALWAYS REMEMBERING WITH SPECIAL AFFECTION THE U.S. POLITICAL FIGURES WHO BY DEFENDING OUR CAUSE HAVE KNOWN HOW TO HONOR THEIR POSITIONS AND SERVE THE PRESTIGE OF THEIR NATION IN A FITTING MANNER."

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DEPT FOR ARA/PAF AND PAN

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11- NEGATIVE ATTITUDES ARE HEARD FROM MIGUEL MORENO WRITING IN MATUTINO, AND VICTOR FRANCESCHI IN PISANDO CALLOS COLUMN OF CRITICA. MORENO SAYS HE DOES NOT KNOW HOW THE SENATE CAN REPAIR DAMAGE CAUSED BY AMENDMENTS AND RESERVATIONS, BUT THAT THE ONLY WAY HE SEES IS "TO ADD, THROUGH RESERVATIONS OR AMENDMENTS TO THE TREATY WHICH IS BEING VOTED ON TODAY, DEFINITE FORMS WHICH NULLIFY THE EFFECTS OF THE AMENDMENTS DAMAGING TO OUR DIGNITY WHICH WERE INTRODUCED TO THE NEUTRALITY TREATY, WHICH NULLIFY THE EFFECTS OF THE DECONCINI AND NUNN RESERVATION, AS WELL AS THE UNDERSTANDINGS AND CONDITIONS WHICH DENIGRATE OUR SOVEREIGNTY. OTHERWISE, FOR US PANAMANIAN, FOR AMERICA AND FOR THE WORLD, THE TREATIES WILL HAVE BEEN REJECTED."

12-MORENO CONCLUDES, HOWEVER, THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FINAL VERDICT ON THE TREATIES LIES NOT WITH SENATORS SUCH AS DECONCINI: "THIS AFFAIR...IS IN THE HANDS OF THE SENATE AS A WHOLE, AND NOT IN THE HANDS OF DECONCINI OR NUNN AS SOME
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WOULD HAVE US SEE. THE RESPONSIBILITY IS THAT OF ALL THE SENATORS, SINCE ALL HAVE THE SAME CAPACITY OF DECISION AND EACH HAS A VOTE OF EQUAL VALUE. THEY SHOULD NOT WANT TO MAKE THEMSELVES INTO PILATES, WASHING THEMSELVES OF THE OUTRAGE OF HISTORY WITH THE NAMES OF DECONCINI OR NUNN, BECAUSE AT THE FINAL COUNT, SENATE VOTES BADLY, THEY WILL ALL BE DECONCINI."

13-FRANCESCHI TAKES EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC VIEW: "BECAUSE IF WE

PANAMANIAN GAVE UP THE DREAM OF BELIEVING IN THE APPROVAL OF
TREATIES IN WHICH WE HARDLY ADVANCED, NOW WE ARE MAINTAINED IN
TORTURED VIGIL FOR SOME PATCHED AND BATTERED DOCUMENTS WHICH
CARRY US MORE OMINOUSLY BACKWARDS. I HAVE NEVER TRUSTED
YANKEE DEMOCRACY, ALTHOUGH I HAVE BELIEVED IN A FEW OF ITS EMINENT
MEN. I HAVE NEVER BELIEVED IN THE DOCUMENTS WHICH THEY HAVE
AGREED TO, BECAUSE THEY ONLY RESPECT THEM WHEN IT IS THEIR SENTENCE
AGAINST OTHERS AND NOT WHEN IT CONSTITUTES A WORD OF HONOR
BETWEEN STATES...I HAVE NEVER TRUSTED THE YANKEE GOVERNMENT
BECAUSE ITS EXPANSIONIST AND EXPLOITATIVE AMBITION
CONTRADICTS WITH A SENSE OF UNDERSTANDING AND GENEROSITY."

14-FRANCESCHI CONCLUDES, "WHAT REMAINS CLEAR IS THAT IMPERIALISM
PROVES...THAT IT CAN TALK OF PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE TOP
OF ITS VOICE FROM ANY PLATFORM AND IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCE,
WHILE ON THE OTHER HAND IT TAKES ACTIONS WHICH SEEK TO BREAK THE
PEACE AND SOW WAR IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD." ITEM UNQUOTE
JORDEN

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